

The Ballad of Beau Brocade

and other Poems

of the XVIII Century

by

Austin Dobson

with

fifty Illustrations

by

Hugh Thomson



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THE BALLAD OF BEAU BROCADE, ETC.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

OLD-WORLD IDYLLS. Eleventh Edition. 1892.

AT THE SIGN OF THE LYRE. Eighth Edition. 1891.

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FABLES OF MR. JOHN GAY. With a Memoir.

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD. With a Preface and Notes.

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"She once had been the rage."—

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London
Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.
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Third Edition.

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TO

LADY BOWEN.

'FOR OLD SAKE'S SAKE.'

'For old sake's sake!' 'Twere hard to choose
Words fitter for an old-world Muse
Than these, that in their cadence bring
Faint fragrance of the posy-ring,
And charms that rustic lovers use.

Life's journey lengthens, and we lose
The first pale flush, the morning hues,—
Ah! but the back-look, lingering,
For old sake's sake!

That *we retain. Though Time refuse*
To lift the veil on forward views,
Despot in most, he is not King
Of those kind memories that cling
Around his travelled avenues
For old sake's sake!

1116387

PREFATORY NOTE.

Concerning the eight pieces here reprinted from "Old-World Idylls" *and* "At the Sign of the Lyre," *it is only necessary to say that they have been chosen because, being laid in the last Century, they appeared to present a congenial field for the artistic ingenuity of Mr. Hugh Thomson, who, notwithstanding the pressure of other duties, has illustrated them with an ability which I can only admire, and a personal enthusiasm for which I can scarcely be sufficiently grateful.*

AUSTIN DOBSON.

September, 1892.

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THE BALLAD OF BEAU BROCADE.



James King's Execution



I.

SEVENTEEN hundred and thirty-nine:—
That was the date of this tale of mine.

First great GEORGE was buried and gone;
GEORGE the Second was plodding on.

LONDON then, as the "Guides" aver,
Shared its glories with *Westminster*;

And people of rank, to correct their "tone,"
Went out of town to *Marybone.*

Those were the days of the War with *Spain,*
PORTO-BELLO would soon be ta'en;

WHITEFIELD preached to the colliers grim,
Bishops in lawn sleeves preached at him;

WALPOLE talked of "a man and his price";
Nobody's virtue was over-nice:—

Those, in fine, were the brave days when
Coaches were stopped by . . . *Highwaymen!*

And of all the knights of the gentle trade
Nobody bolder than "BEAU BROCADE."

This they knew on the whole way down;
Best,—maybe,—at the "*Oak and Crown.*"



"Would 'Chub' for a Guard"

(For timorous cits on their pilgrimage
Would "club" for a "Guard" to ride the stage;

And the Guard that rode on more than one
Was the Host of this hostel's sister's son.)



Open we here on a March-day fine,
Under the oak with the hanging sign.

There was Barber Dick with his basin by;
Cobbler Joe with the patch on his eye;

Portly product of Beef and Beer,

JOHN the host, he was standing near.

Straining and creaking, with wheels awry,

Lumbering came the "*Plymouth Fly*";-



Lumbering up from *Bagshot Heath*,

Guard in the basket armed to the teeth:

Passengers heavily armed inside;

Not the less surely the coach had been tried!



Tried!—but a couple of miles away,
By a well-dressed man!— in the open day!

Tried successfully, never a doubt,—
Pockets of passengers all turned out!

Cloak-bags rifled, and cushions ripped,—
Even an Ensign's wallet stripped!

Even a Methodist hosier's wife
Offered the choice of her Money or Life!

Highwayman's manners no less polite,
Hoped that their coppers (returned) were right:—

Sorry to find the company poor,
Hoped next time they'd travel with more:

Plucked them all at his ease, in short:—
Such was the "*Plymouth Fly's*" report.

Sympathy! horror! and wonderment!

"Catch the Villain!" (But Nobody went.)



"Where the best Strong waters are"

Hosier's wife led into the Bar;

(That 's where the best strong waters are!)



"Humiliation, terror and resentment."

Followed the tale of the hundred-and-one
Things that Somebody ought to have done.

Ensign (of BRAGG'S) made a terrible clangour:
But for the Ladies had drawn his hanger!

Robber, of course, was "BEAU BROCADE":
Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid.

Devonshire DOLLY, plump and red,
Spoke from the gallery overhead:—

Spoke it out boldly, staring hard:—
"Why did n't you shoot then, GEORGE the Guard?"

Spoke it out bolder, seeing him mute:—
"GEORGE the Guard, why did n't you shoot?"

Portly JOHN grew pale and red,
(JOHN was afraid of her, people said:)

Gasped that "DOLLY was surely cracked,"
(JOHN was afraid of her—that 's a fact!)

GEORGE the Guard grew red and pale,
Slowly finished his quart of ale:—

"Shoot? Why—Rabbit him!—did n't he shoot?"
Muttered—"The Baggage was far too 'cute!"

"Shoot? Why he 'd flashed the pan in his eye!"
Muttered—"She 'd pay for it by and by!"
Further than this made no reply.

Nor could a further reply be made,
For GEORGE *was in league with* "BEAU BROCADE"!

And JOHN the Host, in his wakefullest state,
Was not—on the whole—immaculate.

But nobody's virtue was over-nice
When WALPOLE talked of "a man and his price";



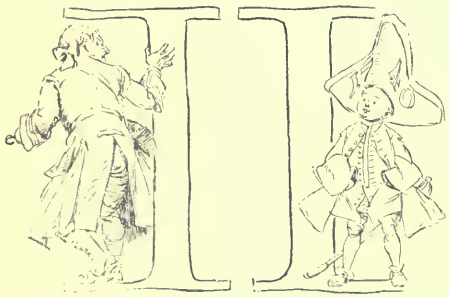
George the Guard



But there Polly the Chamber-maid

And wherever Purity found abode,

'Twas certainly *not* on a posting road.



"Forty" followed to "Thirty-nine."

Glorious days of the *Hanover* line!

Princes were born, and drums were banged

Now and then batches of Highwaymen hanged.

"Glorious news!" — from the *Spanish Main;*

Porto-Bello at last was ta'en.

"Glorious news!"—for the liquor trade;
Nobody dreamed of "BEAU BROCADE."

People were thinking of *Spanish Crowns;*
Money was coming from seaport towns!

Nobody dreamed of "BEAU BROCADE,"
(Only DOLLY the Chambermaid!)

Blessings on VERNON! Fill up the cans;
Money was coming in "*Flys*" and "*Vans.*"

Possibly, JOHN the Host had heard;
Also, certainly, GEORGE the Guard.

And DOLLY had possibly tidings, too,
That made her rise from her bed anew,

Plump as ever, but stern of eye,
With a fixed intention to warn the "*Fly.*"



"and drums were banged"

Lingering only at JOHN his door,

Just to make sure of a jerky snore:



Saddling the gray mare

Saddling the gray mare, *Dumpling Star;*

Fetching the pistol out of the bar;

(The old horse-pistol that, they say,
Came from the battle of *Malplaquet*;)

Loading with powder that maids would use,
Even in "Forty," to clear the flues;

And a couple of silver buttons, the Squire
Gave her, away in *Devonshire*.

These she wadded—for want of better—
With the B—SH—P of L—ND—N'S "Pastoral
Letter":

Looked to the flint, and hung the whole,
Ready to use, at her pocket-hole.

Thus equipped and accoutred, DOLLY
Clattered away to "*Exciseman's Folly*";—

Such was the name of a ruined abode,
Just on the edge of the *London* road.

Thence she thought she might safely try,

As soon as she saw it, to warn the "*Fly*."



But, as chance fell out, her rein she drew,

As the BEAU came cantering into the view.

By the light of the moon she could see him drest
In his famous gold-sprigged tambour vest;



"Came cantering into the view"

And under his silver-gray surtout,
The laced, historical coat of blue,

That he wore when he went to *London-Spaw*,
And robbed Sir MUNGO MUCKLETHRAW.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Trembling a little, but not afraid,)
"Stand and Deliver, O 'BEAU BROCADE'!"

But the BEAU rode nearer, and would not speak,
For he saw by the moonlight a rosy cheek;

And a spavined mare with a rusty hide:
And a girl with her hand at her pocket-side.

So never a word he spoke as yet,
For he thought 'twas a freak of MEG or BET;—
A freak of the "*Rose*" or the "*Rummer*" set.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Tremulous now, and sore afraid,)
"Stand and Deliver, O 'BEAU BROCADE'!"—

Firing then, out of sheer alarm,
Hit the BEAU in the bridle-arm.

Button the first went none knows where,
But it carried away his *solitaire;*

Button the second a circuit made,
Glanced in under the shoulder blade;—
Down from the saddle fell "BEAU BROCADE"!

Down from the saddle and never stirred!—
DOLLY grew white as a *Windsor* curd.

Slipped not less from the mare, and bound
Strips of her kirtle about his wound.

Then, lest his Worship should rise and flee,
Fettered his ankles—tenderly.

Jumped on his chestnut, BET the fleet
(Called after BET of *Portugal Strat*);



"Jotted her down on the spot."

Came like the wind to the old Inn-door;—
Roused fat JOHN from a three-fold snore;—

Vowed she 'd 'peach if he misbehaved . . .
Briefly, the "*Plymouth Fly*" was saved!

Staines and *Windsor* were all on fire:—
DOLLY was wed to a *Yorkshire* squire:
Went to Town at the K—G's desire!

But whether His M—J—STY saw her or not,
HOGARTH jotted her down on the spot;

And something of DOLLY one still may trace
In the fresh contours of his "*Milkmaid's*" face.

GEORGE the Guard fled over the sea:
JOHN had a fit—of perplexity;

Turned King's evidence, sad to state:—
But JOHN was never immaculate.

As for the BEAU, he was duly tried,
When his wound was healed, at *Whitsuntide;*

Served—for a day—as the last of "sights,"
To the world of *St. James's-Street* and "*White's*",

Went on his way to TYBURN TREE,
With a pomp befitting his high degree.

Every privilege rank confers:—
Bouquet of pinks at *St. Sepulchre's;*

Flagon of ale at *Holborn Bar;*
Friends (in mourning) to follow his Car—
("t" is omitted where HEROES are!)

Every one knows the speech he made;
Swore that he "rather admired the Jade!"—

Waved to the crowd with his gold-laced hat:
Talked to the Chaplain after that;



Turned to the Topsman undismayed . . .

This was the finish of "BEAU BROCADE"!

And this is the Ballad that seemed to hide

In the leaves of a dusty "LONDONER'S GUIDE";

"*Humbly Inscrib'd*" (*with curls and tails*)

By the Author to FREDERICK, *Prince of* WALES:—

"*Published by* FRANCIS *and* OLIVER PINE;

Ludgate-Hill, at the Blackmoor Sign.

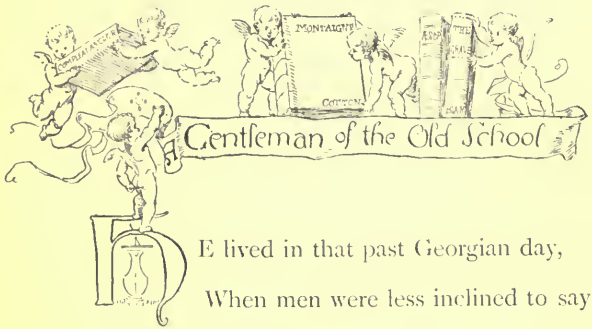
Seventeen-Hundred-and-Thirty-Nine."



Ensign (of Bragg)

A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL.


To catch
the Cuckoos Call



HE lived in that past Georgian day,
When men were less inclined to say
That "Time is Gold," and overlay
With toil their pleasure;
He held some land, and dwelt thereon,—
Where, I forget,—the house is gone:
His Christian name, I think, was John,—
His surname, Leisure.

Reynolds has painted him,—a face
Filled with a fine, old-fashioned grace,
Fresh-coloured, frank, with ne'er a trace
Of trouble shaded;
The eyes are blue, the hair is drest
In plainest way,—one hand is prest
Deep in a flapped canary vest,
With buds brocaded.

He wears a brown old Brunswick coat,
With silver buttons,—round his throat,
A soft cravat;—in all you note
An elder fashion,—
A strangeness, which, to us who shine
In shapely hats,—whose coats combine
All harmonies of hue and line,
Inspires compassion.

He lived so long ago, you see!
Men were untravelled then, but we,
Like Ariel, post o'er land and sea
With careless parting;



He found it quite enough for him
To smoke his pipe in "garden trim,"
And watch, about the fish tank's brim,
The swallows darting.

He liked the well-wheel's creaking tongue,—
He liked the thrush that stopped and sung,—
He liked the drone of flies among
His netted peaches;
He liked to watch the sunlight fall
Athwart his ivied orchard wall;
Or pause to catch the cuckoo's call
Beyond the beeches.

His were the times of Paint and Patch,
And yet no Ranelagh could match
The sober doves that round his thatch
Spread tails and sidled;
He liked their ruffling, puffed content,—
For him their drowsy wheelings meant
More than a Mall of Beaux that bent,
Or Belles that bridled.

Not that, in truth, when life began
He shunned the flutter of the fan;
He too had maybe "pinked his man"
In Beauty's quarrel:



But now his "fervent youth" had flown
Where lost things go; and he was grown
As staid and slow-paced as his own
Old hunter, Sorrel.

Yet still he loved the chase, and held

That no composer's score excelled



The merry horn, when Sweetlip swelled

Its jovial riot;

But most his measured words of praise

Caressed the angler's easy ways,—



His idly meditative days, —

His rustic diet.

Not that his "meditating" rose
Beyond a sunny summer doze;
He never troubled his repose
With fruitless prying;
But held, as law for high and low,
What God withholds no man can know
And smiled away inquiry so,
Without replying.

We read—alas, how much we read!—
The jumbled strifes of creed and creed
With endless controversies feed
Our groaning tables;
His books—and they sufficed him—were
Cotton's "Montaigne," "The Grave" of Blair,
A "Walton"—much the worse for wear,
And "Æsop's Fables."

One more, —"The Bible." Not that he
Had searched its page as deep as we;
No sophistries could make him see
Its slender credit;
It may be that he could not count
The sires and sons to Jesse's fount, —
He liked the "Sermon on the Mount," —
And more, he read it.

Once he had loved, but failed to wed,
A red-cheeked lass who long was dead;
His ways were far too slow, he said,
To quite forget her;
And still when time had turned him gray,
The earliest hawthorn buds in May
Would find his lingering feet astray,
Where first he met her.

"*In Cœlo Quies*" heads the stone
On Leisure's grave,—now little known,
A tangle of wild-rose has grown
So thick across it:



The "Benefactions" still declare
He left the clerk an elbow-chair,
And "12 Pence Yearly to Prepare
A Christmas Posset."

Lie softly, Leisure! Doubtless you,
With too serene a conscience drew
Your easy breath, and slumbered through
The gravest issue:
But we, to whom our age allows
Scarce space to wipe our weary brows,
Look down upon your narrow house,
Old friend, and miss you!

A GENTLEWOMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL.



She'd still her beau,



A Gentlewoman of the Old School

SHE lived in Georgian era too.
Most women then, if bards be true.
Succumbed to Routs and Cards, or grew
Devout and acid.
But hers was neither fate. She came
Of good west-country folk, whose fame
Has faded now. For us her name
Is "Madam Placid."

Patience or Prudence,—what you will,
Some prefix faintly fragrant still
As those old musky scents that fill
Our grandams' pillows
And for her youthful portrait take
Some long-waist child of Hudson's make,
Stiffly at ease beside a lake
With swans and willows.

I keep her later semblance placed
Beside my desk,—'tis lawned and laced,
In shadowy sanguine stipple traced
By Bartolozzi;
A placid face, in which surprise
Is seldom seen, but yet there lies
Some vestige of the laughing eyes
Of arch Piozzi.

For her e'en Time grew debonair.
He, finding cheeks unclaimed of care,
With late-delayed faint roses there,
And lingering dimples,
Had spared to touch the fair old face,
And only kissed with Vauxhall grace
The soft white hand that stroked her lace,
Or smoothed her wimples.

So left her beautiful. Her age
Was comely as her youth was sage,
And yet she once had been the rage:—
It hath been hinted,
Indeed, affirmed by one or two,
Some spark at Bath (as sparks will do)
Inscribed a song to "Lovely Prue,"
Which Urban printed.

I know she thought; I know she felt;
Perchance could sum, I doubt she spelt;
She knew as little of the Celt
As of the Saxon;
I know she played and sang, for yet
We keep the tumble-down spinet
To which she quavered ballads set
By Arne or Jackson.

Her tastes were not refined as ours;
She liked plain food and homely flowers,
Refused to paint, kept early hours,
Went clad demurely;
Her art was sampler-work design,
Fireworks for her were "vastly fine,"
Her luxury was elder-wine,—
She loved that "purely."



"The warm west-facing window-seat"

She was renowned, traditions say,
For June conserves, for curds and whey,
For finest tea (she called it "tay"),
And ratafia;
She knew, for sprains, what bands to choose,
Could tell the sovereign wash to use
For freckles, and was learned in brews
As erst Medea.

Yet studied little. She would read,
On Sundays, "Pearson on the Creed,"
Though, as I think, she could not heed
His text profoundly:
Seeing she chose for her retreat
The warm west-looking window-seat,
Where, if you chanced to raise your feet
You slumbered soundly.

This, 'twixt ourselves. The dear old dame,
In truth, was not so much to blame;
The excellent divine I name
Is scarcely stirring:
Her plain-song piety preferred
Pure life to precept. If she erred,
She knew her faults. Her softest word
Was for the erring.

If she had loved, or if she kept
Some ancient memory green, or wept
Over the shoulder-knot that slept
Within her cuff-box,
I know not. Only this I know,
At sixty-five she 'd still her beau,
A lean French exile, lame and slow,
With monstrous snuff-box.



"Delighted in his dry bon-mots
And tackling laughter."

Younger than she, well-born and bred.
She 'd found him in St. Giles', half dead
Of teaching French for nightly bed
And daily dinners;
Starving, in fact, 'twixt want and pride:
And so, henceforth, you always spied
His rusty "pigeon-wings" beside
Her Mechlin pinners.

He worshipped her, you may suppose.
She gained him pupils, gave him clothes,
Delighted in his dry bon-mots
And cackling laughter:
And when, at last, the long duet
Of conversation and picquet
Ceased with her death, of sheer regret
He died soon after.

Dear Madam Placid! Others knew
Your worth as well as he, and threw
Their flowers upon your coffin too,
I take for granted.
Their loves are lost; but still we see
Your kind and gracious memory
Bloom yearly with the almond tree
The Frenchman planted.


The Almond
Tree

A DEAD LETTER.



"By the Broken Stile."



I

I DREW it from its china tomb :—
It came out feebly scented
With some thin ghost of past perfume
That dust and days had lent it.

An old, old letter, folded still !
To read with due composure,
I sought the sun-lit window-sill,
Above the gray enclosure.

That glimmering in the sultry haze,
Faint-flowered, dimly shaded,
Slumbered like Goldsmith's Madam Blaize,
Bedizened and brocaded.

A queer old place! You 'd surely say
Some tea-board garden-maker
Had planned it in Dutch William's day
To please some florist Quaker,

So trim it was. The yew-trees still,
With pious care perverted,
Grew in the same grim shapes; and still
The lipless dolphin spurted;

Still in his wonted state abode
The broken-nosed Apollo;
And still the cypress-arbour showed
The same umbrageous hollow.

Only, as fresh young Beauty gleams
From coffee-coloured laces,—
So peeped from its old-fashioned dreams
The fresher modern traces:

For idle mallet, hoop, and ball
Upon the lawn were lying;
A magazine, a tumbled shawl,
Round which the swifts were flying;

And tossed beside the Guelder rose,
A heap of rainbow knitting,
Where, blinking in her pleased repose,
A Persian cat was sitting.

"A place to love in, live, for aye,
If we too, like Tithonus,
Could find some God to stretch the gray,
Scant life the Fates have thrown us;

"But now by steam we run our race,
With buttoned heart and pocket;
Our Love 's a gilded, surplus grace,—
Just like an empty locket!

"'The time is out of joint.' Who will,
May strive to make it better;
For me, this warm old window-sill,
And this old dusty letter."

II.

"Dear *John* (the letter ran), it can't, can't be,
For Father 's gone to *Chorley Fair* with *Sam*,
And Mother 's storing Apples,—*Prue* and Me
Up to our Elbows making Damson Jam:
But we shall meet before a Week is gone,—
"'Tis a long Lane that has no Turning,' *John!*



"Sam's two Eyes are all for Cissy"

Hugh Thomson

"Only till Sunday next, and then you 'll wait
Behind the White-Thorn, by the broken Stile—
We can go round and catch them at the Gate,
All to Ourselves, for nearly one long Mile:
Dear *Prue* won't look, and Father he 'll go on,
And *Sam's* two Eyes are all for *Cissy*, *John!*'

"*John*, she 's so smart,—with every Ribbon new,
Flame-coloured Sack, and Crimson Padesoy:
As proud as proud; and has the Vapours too,
Just like My Lady; calls poor *Sam* a Boy,
And vows no Sweet-heart 's worth the Thinking-on
Till he 's past Thirty . . . I know better, *John!*'

"My Dear, I don't think that I thought of much
Before we knew each other, I and you;
And now, why, *John*, your least, least Finger-touch,
Gives me enough to think a Summer through.

See, for I send you Something! There, 'tis gone!
Look in this corner, — mind you find it, *John!*"

III.

This was the matter of the note, —
A long-forgot deposit,
Dropped in an Indian dragon's throat,
Deep in a fragrant closet.

Piled with a dapper Dresden world, —
Beaux, beauties, prayers, and poses, —
Bonzes with squat legs undercurled,
And great jars filled with roses.

Ah, heart that wrote! Ah, lips that kissed!
You had no thought or presage
Into what keeping you dismissed
Your simple old-world message!

A reverent one. Though we to-day
Distrust beliefs and powers,
The artless, ageless things you say
Are fresh as May's own flowers.

Starring some pure primeval spring,
Ere Gold had grown despotic,—
Ere Life was yet a selfish thing,
Or Love a mere exotic!

I need not search too much to find
Whose lot it was to send it,
That feel upon me yet the kind,
Soft hand of her who penned it:

And see, through two score years of smoke,
In by-gone, quaint apparel,
Shine from yon time-black Norway oak
The face of Patience Caryl.

The pale, smooth forehead, silver-tressed ;
The gray gown, primly flowered ;
The spotless, stately coif whose crest
Like Hector's horse-plume towered ;

And still the sweet half-solemn look
Where some past thought was clinging,
As when one shuts a serious book
To hear the thrushes singing.

I kneel to you ! Of those you were,
Whose kind old hearts grow mellow,—
Whose fair old faces grow more fair
As Point and Flanders yellow ;

Whom some old store of garnered grief,
Their placid temples shading,
Crowns like a wreath of autumn leaf
With tender tints of fading.

Peace to your soul! You died unwed
Despite this loving letter.
And what of John? The less that 's said
Of John, I think, the better.



THE OLD SEDAN CHAIR.



"Did he lift a hurdle right"



"*Where's not destroy'd by Time's devouring Hand?*
Where's Troy, and where's the May-Pole in the Strand?"
BRAMSTON'S "ART OF POLITICKS."

IT stands in the stable-yard, under the eaves,
Propped up by a broom-stick and covered with leaves:
It once was the pride of the gay and the fair,
But now 'tis a ruin, that old Sedan chair!

It is battered and tattered,—it little avails
That once it was lacquered, and glistened with nails;
For its leather is cracked into lozenge and square,
Like a canvas by Wilkie,—that old Sedan chair!

See,—here came the bearing-straps; here were the holes
For the poles of the bearers—when once there were poles;
It was cushioned with silk, it was wadded with hair,
As the birds have discovered,—that old Sedan chair!

"Where's Troy?" says the poet! Look,—under the seat,
Is a nest with four eggs. 'tis the favoured retreat
Of the Muscovy hen, who has hatched, I dare swear,
Quite an army of chicks in that old Sedan chair!



"But prone, on a question of fact

And yet Can't you fancy a face in the frame
Of the window, some high-headed damsel or dame,
Be-patched and be-powdered, just set by the stair,
While they raise up the lid of that old Sedan chair?

Can't you fancy Sir Plume, as beside her he stands,
With his ruffles a-droop on his delicate hands,
With his cinnamon coat, with his laced solitaire,
As he lifts her out light from that old Sedan chair?

Then it swings away slowly. Ah, many a league
It has trotted 'twixt sturdy-legged Terence and Teague:
Stout fellows! but prone, on a question of fare,
To brandish the poles of that old Sedan chair!

It has waited by portals where Garrick has played;
It has waited by Heidegger's "Grand Masquerade:"
For my Lady Codille, for my Lady Bellair,
It has waited and waited, that old Sedan chair!

Oh, the scandals it knows! Oh, the tales it could tell
Of Drum and Ridotto, of Rake and of Belle,—
Of Cock-fight and Levee, and (scarcely more rare!)
Of Fête-days at Tyburn, that old Sedan chair!

"*Heu! quantum mutata,*" I say as I go.
It deserves better fate than a stable-yard, though!
We must furbish it up, and dispatch it, –"With Care,"—
To a Fine-Art Museum—that old Sedan chair!

THE LADIES OF ST. JAMES'S.



'They frown on you - for weeks'



"*Phyllida amo ante alias.*"

VIRG.

THE ladies of St. James's
Go swinging to the play;
Their footmen run before them,
With a "Stand by! Clear the way!"
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
She takes her buckled shoon,
When we go out a-courting
Beneath the harvest moon.

The ladies of St. James's
Wear satin on their backs;
They sit all night at *Ombre*,
With candles all of wax;
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
She dons her russet gown,
And runs to gather May dew
Before the world is down.

The ladies of St. James's!
They are so fine and fair,
You 'd think a box of essences
Was broken in the air:
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
The breath of heath and furze,
When breezes blow at morning,
Is not so fresh as hers.



The ladies of St. James's!
They 're painted to the eyes;
Their white it stays for ever,
Their red it never dies:
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
Her colour comes and goes;
It trembles to a lily,—
It wavers to a rose.

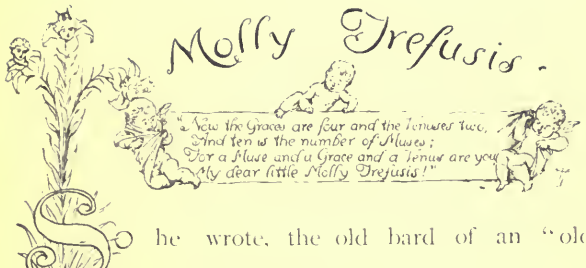
The ladies of St. James's!
You scarce can understand
The half of all their speeches,
Their phrases are so grand:
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
Her shy and simple words
Are clear as after rain-drops
The music of the birds.

The ladies of St. James's!
They have their fits and freaks;
They smile on you—for seconds,
They frown on you—for weeks:
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!
Come either storm or shine,
From Shrove-tide unto Shrove-tide,
Is always true—and mine.

My Phyllida! my Phyllida!
I care not though they heap
The hearts of all St. James's,
And give me all to keep;
I care not whose the beauties
Of all the world may be,
For Phyllida—for Phyllida
Is all the world to me!

MOLLY TREFUSIS.





So he wrote, the old bard of an "old magazine:"

As a study it not without use is,
If we wonder a moment who she may have been,
This same "little Molly Trefusis!"

She was Cornish. We know that at once by the "Tre:"
Then of guessing it scarce an abuse is
If we say that where Bude bellows back to the sea
Was the birthplace of Molly Trefusis.

And she lived in the era of patches and bows,
Not knowing what rouge or ceruse is;
For they needed (I trust) but her natural rose,
The lilies of Molly Trefusis.

And I somehow connect her (I frankly admit
That the evidence hard to produce is)
With BATH in its hey-day of Fashion and Wit,—
This dangerous Molly Trefusis.

I fancy her, radiant in ribbon and knot,
(How charming that old-fashioned puce is!)
All blooming in laces, fal-lals and what not,
At the PUMP ROOM,—Miss Molly Trefusis.

I fancy her reigning,—a Beauty,—a Toast,
Where BLADUD'S medicinal cruse is;
And we know that at least of one Bard it could boast,—
The Court of Queen Molly Trefusis.


Miss Molly Drew

He says she was "VENUS." I doubt it. Beside,
(Your rhymer so hopelessly loose is!)
His "little" could scarce be to Venus applied,
If fitly to Molly Trefusis.

No, no. It was HEBE he had in his mind:
And fresh as the handmaid of Zeus is,
And rosy, and rounded, and dimpled,—you'll find,—
Was certainly Molly Trefusis!

Then he calls her "a MUSE." To the charge I reply
That we all of us know what a Muse is;
It is something too awful, too acid, too dry,
For sunny-eyed Molly Trefusis.

But "a GRACE." There I grant he was probably right;
(The rest but a verse-making ruse is)
It was all that was graceful, intangible, light,
The beauty of Molly Trefusis!

Was she wooed? Who can hesitate much about that
Assuredly more than obtuse is;
For how could the poet have written so pat
"*My* dear little Molly Trefusis!"

And was wed? That I think we must plainly infer,
Since of suitors the common excuse is
To take to them Wives. So it happened to her,
Of course,—"little Molly Trefusis!"

To the Bard? 'Tis unlikely. Apollo, you see,
In practical matters a goose is;—
'Twas a knight of the shire, and a hunting J.P.,
Who carried off Molly Trefusis!

And you 'll find, I conclude, in the "*Gentleman's Mag.*,"
At the end, where the pick of the news is,
"*On the* (blank), *at 'the Bath,' to Sir Hilary Bragg,*
With a Fortune, Miss Molly Trefusis."



"I was a Knight of the Shire"

Thereupon . . But no farther the student may pry:

Love's temple is dark as Eleusis;

So here, at the threshold, we part, you and I

From "dear little Molly Trefusis."



A CHAPTER OF FROISSART.



Six ivy-leaf for "Orchard, corner"



(GRANDPAPA LOQUITUR.)

YOU don't know Froissart now, young folks,
This age, I think, prefers recitals
Of high-spiced crime, with "slang" for jokes,
And startling titles:

But, in my time, when still some few
Loved "old Montaigne," and praised Pope's *Homer*
(Nay, thought to style him "poet" too,
Were scarce misnomer),

Sir John was less ignored. Indeed,
I can re-call how Some-one present
(Who spoils her grandson, Frank!) would read,
And find him pleasant;

For,—by this copy,—hangs a Tale.
Long since, in an old house in Surrey,
Where men knew more of "morning ale"
Than "Lindley Murray,"

In a dim-lighted, whip-hung hall,
'Neath Hogarth's "Midnight Conversation,"
It stood; and oft 'twixt spring and fall,
With fond elation,

I turned the brown old leaves. For there
All through one hopeful happy summer,
At such a page (I well knew where),
Some secret comer,

Whom I can picture, 'Trix, like you
(Though scarcely such a colt unbroken),
Would sometimes place for private view
A certain token :—

A rose-leaf meaning "Garden Wall,"
An ivy-leaf for "Orchard corner,"
A thorn to say, "Don't come at all,"—
Unwelcome warner!—

Not that, in truth, our friends gainsaid :
But then Romance required dissembling,
(Ann Radcliffe taught us that!) which bred
Some genuine trembling :

Though, as a rule, all used to end
In such kind confidential parley
As may to you kind Fortune send,
You long-legged Charlie,

When your time comes. How years slip on !
We had our crosses like our betters ;
Fate sometimes looked askance upon
Those floral letters ;

And once, for three long days disdained,
The dust upon the folio settled ;
For some-one, in the right, was pained,
And some-one nettled,

That sure was in the wrong, but spake
Of fixed intent and purpose stony
To serve King George, enlist and make
Minced-meat of "Boney,"

Who yet survived—ten years at least.
And so, when she I mean came hither
One day that need for letters ceased,
She brought this with her.



Here is the leaf-stained Chapter :—*How*

The English King laid Siege to Calais ;

I think Gran. knows it even now,—

Go ask her, Alice.

NOTES.

NOTES.

Note 1, Page 7.

"*Ensign* (*of* Bragg's) *made a terrible clangour.*"

Despite its suspicious appropriateness in this case, "Bragg's" regiment of Foot-Guards really existed, and was ordered to Flanders in April, 1742 (see *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1742, i. 217).

Note 2, Page 9.

"Porto-Bello *at last was ta'en.*"

Porto-Bello was taken in November, 1739. But Vice-Admiral Vernon's despatches did not reach England until the following March (see *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1740, i. 124, *et seq.*).

Note 3, Page 17.

"*In the fresh contours of his* 'Milkmaid's' *face.*"

See Hogarth's *Enraged Musician*, an engraving of which was published in November of the following year (1741). To annotate this Ballad more fully would be easy; but the reader will perhaps take the details for granted. In answer to some enquiries, it may, however, be stated that there is no foundation in fact for the story.

NOTE 4, PAGE 61.

"*To brandish the poles of that old Sedan Chair!*"

A friendly critic, whose versatile pen it is not easy to mistake, recalls, *à-propos* of the above, the following passage from Molière, which shows that Chairmen are much the same all the world over:—

"1 Porteur (prenant un des bâtons de sa chaise). *Cà, payez nous vitement!*

Mascarille. *Quoi?*

1 Porteur. *Je dis que je veux avoir de l'argent tout à l'heure.*

Mascarille. *Il est raisonnable, celui-là*," etc.

Les Précieuses Ridicules, Sc. vii.

NOTE 5, PAGE 71.

MOLLY TREFUSIS.

The epigram here quoted from "an old magazine" is to be found in the late Lord Neaves's admirable little volume, *The Greek Anthology* (Blackwood's *Ancient Classics for English Readers*). Those familiar with eighteenth-century literature will recognize in the verses that follow but another echo of those lively stanzas of John Gay to "Molly Mogg of the Rose," which found so many imitators in his own day.

Whether my heroine is to be identified with a certain "Miss Trefusis" whose poems are sometimes to be found in the second-hand booksellers' catalogues, I know not. But if she is, I trust I have done her accomplished shade no wrong.



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